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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
SP-02 PM-03 L-01 PRS-01 ACDA-07 ARA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00
EB-04 /058 W
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R 041802Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0427
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL OPORTO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1751

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PFOR CU PO
SUBJECT: MARIO SOARES ON PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST
PARTY STRATEGY

REF: LISBON 1416

1. I HAD LUNCH WITH MARIO SOARES MARCH 4 JUST PRIOR TO HIS WEEKLY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT. SOARES TOLD ME ONE OF PRINCIPAL THEMES OF THE MEETING WOULD BE THEIR COMMON CONCERN ABOUT EMERGING COMMUNIST STRATEGY IN PORTUGAL. THEY WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONVINCED THAT ACTING ON ORDERS FROM MOSCOW THE COMMUNISTS WERE MOVING TOWARD A
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WIN OR LOSE EVERYTHING STRATEGY. FOLLOWING ON THE HEELS OF THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AUSTERITY MEASURES, THE COMMUNISTS INTEND TO "MOVE OUT THEIR HEAVY ARTILLERY-- THE METALLURGICAL WORKERS UNION AND CIVIL CONSTRUCTION UNION." SOARES SAID ANOTHER INCIDENT HAD ALSO TAKEN PLACE IN THE MILITARY IN CALDAS DA RAINHA SIMILAR TO THE INCIDENT IN ESTREMOZ (REFTEL).

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2. I ASKED HOW THE COMMUNISTS COULD SQUARE THIS APPROACH WITH THEIR PREVIOUS COMMENT TO SOARES THAT THEY DID NOT INTEND TO BRING THE GOVERNMENT DOWN BECAUSE THEY FEARED SOMETHING WORSE WOULD ENSUE. SOARES SAID THIS WAS INDEED A DILEMMA FOR THEM, BUT IT WAS BECOMING CLEAR TO THE PCP THAT THEY WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO ENTICE THE SOCIALISTS INTO A COALITION, HENCE THEY WERE BECOMING MORE DESPERATE AS THE GOVERNMENT GAINED STRENGTH. LOOKED AT FROM MOSCOW'S VIEWPOINT EVEN A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN PORTUGAL WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO THE PRESENT SITUATION IN WHICH THE PRO-WESTERN FORCES ARE GRADUALLY GAINING POWER. IF MOSCOW SO DIRECTED, THE PCP WOULD BE ONLY TOO READY TO SACRIFICE ITSELF FOR THE CAUSE.

3. SOARES THEN TOLD A RATHER LENGTHY STORY WHICH DOES NOT ADD TO OUR ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION HERE BUT WHICH MAY BE OF SOME VALUE TO THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON. ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25 VICTOR ALVES, A MEMBER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, WAS TOLD BY THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR THAT FIDEL CASTRO WOULD MAKE A FOUR-HOUR STOP IN LISBON THE FOLLOWING TUESDAY, MARCH 1. THE PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR IN HAVANA WAS QUERIED AND KNEW NOTHING. THE CUBANS SAID NO MORE OVER THE WEEKEND. ON MONDAY, THE DAY BEFORE THE PLANNED VISIT, THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR CALLED AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO ANNOUNCE THE GREAT NEWS THAT FIDEL CASTRO WOULD MAKE A FOUR-HOUR TECH-NICAL STOP IN LISBON THE FOLLOWING MORNING. ACTING ON ORDERS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TOLD THE CUBANS THEY HAD BYPASSED ALL NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS IN CONVEYING THIS INFORMATION AND THAT IT WOULD NOT
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BE APPROPRIATE FOR CASTRO TO COME TO PORTUGAL AT THIS POINT IN TIME. AS A RESULT, CASTRO WENT DIRECTLY TO TRIPOLI.

4. COMMENT:IT IS OF COURSE POSSIBLE THAT BOTH SOARES AND EANES ARE OVERLY DRAMATIZING COMMUNIST STRATEGY TO ENCOURAGE US ON THE LOAN, BUT I FRANKLY DOUBT THIS. I HAVE WORKED WITH SOARES NOW FOR OVER TWO YEARS AND HAVE NOT FOUND HIM GIVEN TO THAT KIND OF TACTIC. HE IS NOT A DEVIOUS MAN. EANES IS KNOWN AS A MAN OF FEW WORDS, ALL OF WHICH HE WEIGHS CAREFULLY AND ALL OF WHICH ARE VERY DIRECT. I THINK THEIR CONCERN ABOUT A RENEWED COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. AT THE SAME TIME I SHOULD NOTE THAT BOTH EANES AND SOARES HAVE TOLD ME THAT WITH OUR BACKING THEY ARE CONFIDENT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO HANDLE CUNHAL AND HIS FRIENDS.
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Message Attributes

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